

Ex. Doc. No. 30.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

REVENUE MARINE SERVICE.

LETTER

FROM THE

ACTING SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

TRANSMITTING

*The annual report of the officer charged with the superintendence of
the United States revenue marine service and boats.*

JANUARY 26, 1848.

Read, and referred to the Committee on Commerce.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, *January 24, 1848.*

SIR: I have the honor to submit to the House of Representatives the annual report of the officer charged with the superintendence of the revenue marine, under the supervision of the department. It will be perceived that the vessels have been profitably employed, and that arrangements have been made to reduce the expenditure on account of this branch of the public service to the lowest limit consistent with efficiency; and that the condemnation and sale of several of the vessels, and the abandonment of the steamers, have left a large extent of seaboard entirely unguarded. On these subjects I would respectfully refer to the suggestions of Captain Fraser in this report, upon whose experience and good judgment in his profession full reliance may be placed.

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

McCLINTOCK YOUNG,

Acting Secretary of the Treasury.

Hon. ROBERT C. WINTHROP,

*Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Washington, D. C.*

REVENUE BUREAU, TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
January 24, 1848.

SIR: In obedience to the requirements of the regulations for the government of the United States revenue marine, I have the honor to submit my annual report upon the condition of that service.

At the date of my last report, several of the vessels were stationed in the Gulf of Mexico, where, while protecting the interests of the revenue in that quarter, they were employed, incidentally, in co-operating with the other branches of the public service, in maintaining the blockade of Mexican ports, and in facilitating the transmission of intelligence, to and from the seat of war, by carrying the mails and public despatches. This disposition of a portion of the forces was made by the President, in consequence of the navy not having been in possession of small vessels at the commencement of the war which were adapted to the shoal harbors of that coast. That those incidental services were frequently of the greatest importance, is fully exhibited by the complimentary manner in which they were alluded to by the commanders of the gulf squadron, particularly in the cases of the schooner *Forward*, under command of Captain Henry B. Nones, in the attacks upon *Tobasco* and *Alvarado*, and of the steamer *McLane*, under command of Captain William A. Howard, which vessel maintained successfully the blockade of the former port throughout several months, having been moored in the river near *Fontera*, and unable, from the defects in machinery, as well as the shoal water on the bar, to have escaped, had an attack been made by a superior force.

The commander of the gulf squadron having received an accession of several small steamers to the force under his command, the *McLane* was ordered to New Orleans on the 26th of December, 1846, which orders, owing to the irregularity of the mails, did not reach their destination until several months afterwards, at which time it was deemed important that the blockade which she was enforcing should be still maintained, and from which service she was not relieved until June of the past year, at which time she arrived at New Orleans; the crew was discharged and the vessel dismantled.

On the 15th of April last, the schooners *Forward* and *Ewing* were ordered from the gulf to resume their former stations in the Delaware bay and at New York. The schooners *Van Buren* and *Woodbury*, after having served a short time on the coast of Mexico, were reported by a survey to be so defective in the hulls as to render extensive repairs necessary. They were ordered to New York, where, on their arrival, a survey was held by the inspectors of the underwriters upon their condition; the result of which was their condemnation and sale at public auction. The schooner *Taney*, which vessel was enumerated in the list of vessels employed at the date of my last report, was, on the 4th of August last, by direction of the President, transferred temporarily to the Navy Department, under the orders of which that vessel still remains. The condemnation and sale of the *Van Buren* and *Woodbury*, the loss of the *Morris* in the hurricane at Key West, the transfer of the

Taney, and the entire failure of the steamers to answer the purposes for which they were designed, leaves several important stations at the north unprovided with vessels, and the whole line of coast from the Chesapeake bay to the southern boundary of the United States, except at Mobile bay, entirely unguarded.

The steamers Dallas, at Erie, and Jefferson, at Oswego, have been kept in ordinary during the past season, and no expenditure made on their account which was not absolutely necessary for the preservation of the vessels and the property on board. The Bibb reached Boston from New Orleans on the 12th of July last, and was immediately transferred to Lieutenant Davis, of the coast survey, the crew discharged, and her accounts as a revenue vessel closed.

The boiler of the Spencer, which vessel was likewise ordered to the Gulf of Mexico, was found, on reaching Charleston, to be so defective that the vessel returned to Philadelphia; the boiler was removed and the vessel taken from the water, where she now lies. The Legaré has, since her return from the south, been furnished with a new boiler and machinery, and provided with Captain Ericsson's condensing apparatus, designed to afford a continuous supply of fresh water to the boiler, thereby increasing its durability, by preventing the rapid accumulation of salt. Experiments have been made with the apparatus, by a commission of scientific gentlemen, and, as exhibited by the report of Charles H. Haswell, esq., engineer-in-chief, United States navy, the result of their investigations was perfectly satisfactory. This vessel has been transferred to the coast survey, and the revenue marine relieved of further expenditures on her account.

Since my last report, the Polk, which was at that time under construction at Richmond, has been completed, and was immediately turned over to the navy.

After having been several days at sea, under orders to the Gulf of Mexico, this vessel returned to Norfolk, and was reported to leak so badly as to be unseaworthy. Upon examination it was found that the sponsons, which were placed under the guards, were not properly secured, and that through them the water found its way into the body of the vessel. The cruise was abandoned, the vessel returned to the revenue service, and now lies at the navy yard, New York.

It is to be regretted that this vessel should have failed to meet the confident anticipations of the department, and it is but due to those who were responsible for the construction, that the immediate causes of the failure should be made known. The late President directed that two steamers should be contracted for, one of which was designed especially for the Bay of Mobile, and the other for the coast of Georgia, including the navigation inside. In order to adapt them to the stations for which they were thus expressly designed, the draft of water was limited to eight, and the length to one hundred and twenty-six feet. By direction of the then President, these two elements for preparing the models and building instructions were furnished to the Bureau of Construction of the

Navy, at which office the models and instructions for the government of the constructor (now on file in this office) were prepared.

It was found on launching the Polk that the draught of water was much greater than was anticipated, in consequence of the want of sufficient beam, or of being too sharp. In addition to which, an unnecessary weight of materials were used in the construction.

The additional weight of material, however, could not be fairly estimated at more than 40,000 pounds, which, at the eight foot line, would not have increased the immersion more than five inches. The defect, therefore, was in the model.

Owing to the change in the service for which she was designed, it was necessary to place on board great additional weight in equipments, fuel, provisions, &c., which increased the draught to more than ten feet, and consequently, from the great immersion, rendered the side wheels inefficient.

Had the vessel been retained for revenue purposes, but twenty men would have been required, with provisions for one month, and fuel for not more than four or five days. Whereas, for naval purposes, a crew of 60 or 70 men was placed on board, with all their baggage, provisions, and water. And not only were the bunkers filled with coal, but a deck load was taken on board in bags. In addition to this, the weight of shot, ammunition, &c., was increased.

The workmanship of the hull and machinery, with the exception of the sponsons, is faithfully executed, and, notwithstanding the increased draught of water, the Polk might be made as efficient as any steamer of her class, by raising the shaft two feet, removing the sponsons, the heavy bulwarks and houses, as recommended by Mr. Lighthall and Captain Ericsson.

The defects in the Polk were discovered in time to prevent, in a great measure, their occurrence in the Walker, which vessel is now completed.

In this vessel all the superincumbent weight above alluded to, has been dispensed with, and the shaft sufficiently elevated for adaptation to an increased immersion. This vessel was recently launched, and will be immediately transferred to the hydrographical party of the coast survey employed upon the southern coast, and in which service it will no doubt be eminently useful.

Experience having fully established the fact that the duties of the revenue marine will not justify the great expenditure consequent upon the employment of steam vessels; and the greater efficiency of the small sail vessels heretofore employed for that particular service, and the failure of most of the steamers to meet the reasonable anticipations of the department, it has been determined to make such disposition of them, as will be most economical and useful to the government, and relieve immediately this branch of the public service from the expense of their maintenance. With this view, the circular marked A was issued, and it was decided to transfer a portion to the coast survey, and to convert such as are of most objectionable model into floating-lights.

The necessary arrangements for carrying this determination into

effect is being made, and will result in saving to the government several hundred thousand dollars.

The before-mentioned circular provides, likewise, for a great reduction in the expenditure of the service generally, and went into operation on the first of November last. When the provisions of this circular shall have been fully carried into effect, the service will be relieved from a burden imposed upon it by those having no interest in its efficiency, and who—taking advantage of the then existing law, which permitted revenue vessels to be constructed without a special act, and to be paid for out of the receipts of the customs—made this service the vehicle through which, prior to March 4, 1845, to introduce those visionary plans, which had been condemned by all practical men.

The influence exerted to carry these plans into execution were irresistible, and all the arguments used by the officers of the service to prevent it, were of no avail.

Measures have, likewise, been taken to reduce very materially the expenditure on account of revenue boats, employed by the collectors for the purpose of boarding vessels in the harbors, and placing inspectors of the customs on board.

The circular marked B, which took effect on the first of the present month, will exhibit this arrangement. The force now employed under this circular is as small as the interests of the government will warrant, and the expenditure has been reduced to the lowest possible limit consistent with efficiency.

It will be perceived, by reference to the circulars before alluded to, that such a system has been established as will ensure the most rigid economy in the expenditure on account of both branches of the service.

The number of men composing the crews have been greatly reduced, and fairly proportioned to the tonnage of the vessels. Before any expenditure, even of the most trifling character, can be made, it is necessary that all requisitions shall be first submitted for the sanction of the department, with the market prices of all articles attached, thus bringing the expenditures more fully under the guards and checks of the accounting officers, like payments made out of the treasury.

During the past winter such of the vessels as were not absent, in the Gulf of Mexico, were employed, as heretofore, in the incidental duty of searching for, and carrying succor, and relief to distressed merchantmen, and, in this severe and perilous service, their duties have been performed in such a manner as to elicit the commendation and praise of those interested in the commerce of the country, and the gratitude of those who were relieved by these messengers of mercy.

The great benefits which have resulted from these incidental duties has not been confined to the mercantile community, and to those whose physical sufferings have been relieved, but many valuable vessels, with cargoes of dutiable goods, have been enabled, by the prompt assistance afforded to them, when their own crew were exhausted by the hardships of a winter's voyage, to reach port in safe-

ty; and, thus, has more than sufficient revenue been saved to the government to bear the expenses of the service.

During the previous winter, when all the vessels were at their proper stations, these little vessels traversed upon this coast a distance of 26,354 miles, spoke and boarded 1,264 vessels, and afforded prompt and important relief to 89 distressed vessels. Estimating the value of those vessels at the moderate sum of \$20,000 each, and their cargoes at the same amount, and we have presented a capital of \$3,560,000, in the preservation of which, the officers and crews have been instrumental. The older officers of the service are, generally, men who have been reared amidst the hardships of, and are intimately acquainted with, the navigation of the coast. And it is a fact worthy of remark, that notwithstanding the small size of the vessels, and the character of the coast upon which they are employed, no serious accident has befallen them during several years: giving evidence of the skill of the commanders. It has been suggested, that the revenue vessels cannot be expected to afford much relief to others during severe weather, in consequence of their small tonnage. This is an error; any relief afforded by any vessel must be done by boats, and the revenue vessels are provided with the best description of whale boats.

The vessels, themselves, are fine sea boats; and although small, wet, and uncomfortable, are perfectly safe. During the continuance of a severe gale, no relief can be afforded; but, when it abates, they are present, and prepared to render whatsoever aid may be required; while their light draught of water enables them to seek shelter, and obtain additional supplies when necessary.

I would reiterate the suggestion, that additional small sailing vessels be provided to supply the vacancies heretofore enumerated. One half of the amount expended upon one of the steamers would provide four such vessels, estimating the cost at \$15,000 each—a sufficient number to maintain a vigilant guard at every point. We have a line of sea coast embracing North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, and Texas, which, from the character of the numerous inlets and harbors, presents every facility for illicit trade, which can only be checked by the presence of those familiar with the navigation.

The total expenditure, on account of the service, for the fiscal year ending the 30th June last, amounted to the enormous sum of \$501,532 24; of which \$328,407 61 was expended in fulfilment of contracts entered into prior to March 4, 1845, on account of the construction and maintenance of the worthless steamers, and for which the faith of the government was pledged. These contracts being now nearly closed, the recent arrangement will relieve the government of this useless expenditure, and reduce it to the sum of \$175,000 per annum. It was supposed that some of the steamers might be disposed of advantageously to private individuals, to be used for freighting, or other purposes; and, with that view, on the arrival of the McLane at New Orleans, notice of sale was given in the papers of that city and Mobile during the whole of one month, and proposals invited. Steamers of every description,

adapted to ocean navigation, met with ready sale and high prices at that place. The result was, that for this vessel, which had cost the government one hundred and twenty thousand dollars, but one solitary bid was received, and that for *three thousand dollars!* What further evidence is necessary to exhibit the entire failure of the plan?

But although the government has failed to get rid of the vessel, the experiment has furnished full and incontestible evidence of the real value of this one, and all of similar description.

The models of the Legare and Jefferson, which were among the number first constructed, are unexceptionable; one is furnished with Ericsson's, and the other with Loper's, propeller, and would be an acquisition to any service, where the duties would justify the expenditure for their maintenance.

In conclusion, I would remark, that several of the officers are now employed on board of the revenue boats at the Balize, Southwest Pass, Point la Hache, Rochester, Sackett's Harbor, Castine, Wiscasset, and Frenchman's bay, a service for which their profession renders them particularly qualified, and which employment reduces very materially the annual expenditure on account of revenue boats; and that the sailing vessels are now prepared to resume their stations, as relief vessels upon the coast, during the present winter.

The Walker has reached New Orleans, from Pittsburg; and the department is this day in receipt of the gratifying intelligence, that her performances are such as to meet its most sanguine anticipations.

I have the honor to be, most respectfully, your obedient servant,
ALEXANDER V. FRASER,
Captain Rev. Marine.

Hon. R. J. WALKER,
Secretary of the Treasury.

A.

REVENUE MARINE.

Circular to officers commanding therevenue vessels, and to collectors charged with disbursements on account of said vessels.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
October 8, 1817.

It appears that the expenditures on account of the revenue marine, for the last fiscal year, greatly exceeded the sum which, in my opinion, ought to be disbursed for the service. No censure, however, can be attached to any one on this account. These large expenditures have grown chiefly out of the construction and employment of steam vessels.

No contract for the building of any steam vessel has been made

by me. These contracts were all entered into by my predecessors in office. From the information placed before my predecessors, at the time these contracts were made by them, the construction of these vessels for the revenue marine was no doubt deemed by them highly useful and beneficial. Entertaining, however, a contrary opinion, almost immediately after entering upon the duties of this department, I suspended the further execution of all contracts for the construction of these steam-vessels not already completed.

Upon appeal, however, by the parties concerned, from my decision for the opinion of the Attorney General of the United States, it was decided by that officer, that these contracts were obligatory in law upon the government, and after a careful investigation, concurring as I did, in that opinion, and unwilling to violate the faith of the government plighted to individuals, under competent authority by my predecessors, I was reluctantly constrained to revoke the suspension of the contracts, and permit the construction of these vessels to proceed. These contracts being brought, however, now almost entirely to a close, and the faith of the government being no longer implicated thereafter in a continuance of such expenditures, I have resolved to bring them to a close.

To accomplish this most desirable object, and save thereby annually to the government a very large expenditure, amounting to several hundred thousand dollars, it is determined to dispense with all future expenditures, (except payments now due,) on account of steam-vessels for the revenue marine. Such of these vessels as are not fit for sea service will be converted into light-ships, in which capacity they will be exceedingly useful, the machinery being first taken out, and sold for the benefit of the government, on previous advertisement, to the highest bidder for cash at public auction. The remainder of these vessels can be rendered highly serviceable in the navy or on the coast survey; but are not at all adapted to the revenue marine. This being accomplished, it is determined to reduce the whole expenditure for the revenue marine, after the first day of November next, to an annual sum not exceeding in the whole one hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars. With a view to this reduction, the number of petty officers, cooks, stewards, seamen, and boys, allowed to the different sailing vessels now in commission after the before-mentioned date, will be found in the annexed table, marked (A,) and no other expenditure must be created except on account of the payment of officers, and of contracts for ship chandlery and rations, which shall have been previously sanctioned by the department.

No other payments, not specially authorized, will be made on any account, instructions to this effect having been this day issued by this department to the First Auditor and First Comptroller of the treasury.

The object of this regulation is to save useless and extravagant expenditures, to consult a judicious economy expedient at all times, but especially during war, and to bring these disbursements, like payments out of the treasury, under the guards and checks established by law for such payments, by the prior examination of the

proper accounting officers of the treasury and the supervision of this department. The cordial aid and co-operation of the collectors of the customs, as well as of all officers of the revenue marine in carrying these measures into execution is expected by this department.

R. J. WALKER,
Secretary of the Treasury.

N. B.—Collectors and other disbursing officers are requested to designate upon the abstract for the present quarter, such payment as may have been made under the instructions contained in this circular.

Complement of petty officers, cooks, stewards, seamen, and boys, allowed to each class of revenue vessels on and after the first day of November next.

Class.	Boatswain.	Gunner.	Carpenter	Cook.	Stewards.	Seamen.	Boys.	Rations in kind, per diem.	Rations commuted per diem.
First.....	1	1	1	1	2	16	6	23	5
Second.....	1	1	1	1	2	14	4	19	5
Third.....	1	1	1	1	2	12	4	17	5

The revenue schooner ——— is of the ——— class, and the crew list and pay rolls will be regulated accordingly.

B.

Circular to collectors and other officers of the customs charged with disbursements on account of revenue boats.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
November 1, 1847.

It appears that the expenditure on account of revenue boats for the last fiscal year greatly exceeded the sum which, in my opinion, ought to be disbursed for that service.

In order to reduce these expenditures to the lowest limit which the service will permit, it is determined to discontinue the expenditure altogether upon several stations, to reduce them on the others, and to establish at each a fixed expenditure for boat hands. With a view to this reduction, on and after the first day of December next, there will be allowed in your district the sum of dol-

lars, monthly, for the payment of boat hands, which you will proportion and distribute as your own discretion shall dictate.

No other payment, not specially authorized, will be made on any account, instructions to this effect having been this day issued by this department to the First Auditor and First Comptroller of the Treasury.

The object of this regulation is to consult a judicious economy, proper at all times, but especially during war, and to bring these disbursements, like payments out of the treasury, more effectually under the guards and checks established by law for such payments, by the prior examination of the proper accounting officers of the treasury, and the supervision of this department. The cordial aid and co-operation of the collectors and surveyors of the customs, in carrying these measures into effect, is expected by this department.

R. J. WALKER,
Secretary of the Treasury.

*Collector of the customs
District of*